

New EU forest strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector

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The European Parliament adopted by 566 votes to 66, with 45 abstentions, a resolution on a new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector.

The resolution welcomed the Commission communication on a new EU forest strategy and the accompanying working documents, and stressed that an EU forest strategy must i) focus on the **sustainable management of forests** and their multifunctional role from the economic, social and environmental viewpoints and ii) must ensure **better coordination and communication of Community policies directly or indirectly linked to forestry**.

Recalling that the Member States decide policy approaches in this area, Parliament opposed to any attempt to make forestry a matter of EU policy. It demands that the sector's local and regional basis and the competence of the Member States in this be respected.

The resolution stressed the important role of the sustainable production and use of timber for the development of **sustainable economic models and the creation of green jobs**. It called on the Commission to analyse the difficulties in the downstream supply chain related to increased demand from third countries, particularly for roundwoods, and to support this sector.

Parliament underlined the possibility for Member States and regions i) to use **funding available** in their respective rural development programmes, ii) to support sustainable forest management and to stimulate agroforestry, iii) to provide public environmental goods such as the production of oxygen, reducing the level of CO₂ and the crop protection against the effects of climate change.

Given that around 60% of the EU's forests are private, with about 16 million private forest owners, Members underlined the **importance of ownership and property rights** and supported all measures enabling stakeholder groups to participate in a dialogue on reinforcing and implementing sustainable forest management and improve the exchange of information.

Resource efficiency – timber as a sustainable raw material (sustainable forest management): the resolution stressed that both the use of timber as a renewable raw material and sustainable forest management have an important role to play in the achievement of the EU's socio-political goals such as the energy transition, climate mitigation and adaptation to it. Lack of active forest management would be inimical to these goals.

Parliament supported the Commission's intention to develop, together with the Member States and stakeholders, **an ambitious, objective and demonstrable set of criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of forests**. In this context, they called on the Member States and the Commission to make all necessary efforts to resume these negotiations (already well advanced) within the requirements of *Forest Europe* towards a '**European Forest Convention**' as a binding framework for sustainable forest management and for improving the balance of interests in forest policy.

In line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, the Member States are called on to monitor and **promote the implementation of the forest management plans without creating unnecessary administrative burdens**.

Research and development – education and training: Parliament stressed the significant role that the **bioeconomy** plays in terms of achieving the Commission's new priorities of growth, employment and investment. The bioeconomy represented in 2009 a market estimated to be worth over EUR 2 trillion, providing 20 million jobs and accounting for 9% of total employment in the EU.

The Commission is called on:

- to assess, from the point of view of forestry and wood working priorities, the European R&D programmes (Horizon 2020) and the programme for the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME);
- to develop new instruments for the forest-based sector;
- to promote targeted research into cost-effective solutions for new and innovative timber products to support the development of the sustainable wood-based bioeconomy;
- to devise measures and, where possible, to use existing European instruments **to support generation renewal and compensate for the skilled workforce shortage in the forests** in developing programmes of training in particular those intended for young foresters.

Welcoming the efforts made by the Commission to set up a European information system on forests, Members recommended provision of more sets of long-term data to help understand trends in forestry.

In addition, they judge it important: i) to promote the sustainable use of forest products in the construction sector, including application to the construction of more affordable houses built from sustainably sourced raw materials; ii) to encourage scientific research work oriented towards rational use of biomass.

Global challenges - environment and climate change: the Commission and the Member States are called on to take specific action with a view to achieving Aichi Target 5, under which the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, **should be at least halved by 2020 and where feasible brought close to zero.**

Parliament called on the Commission to finalise the review of the efficiency of the [EU Regulation on wood](#), which aims to combat illegal logging and the placement of illegal timber on the EU market, to develop an **action plan to prevent deforestation** and degradation of forests and to strengthen the support for the forest sector in related international bodies.